

Karen Mathis
House of Delegates Remarks
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Thank you.

It's a joy to be here in the House, where I have worked with so many of you.

I want to begin by saying, "thank you."

The last 18 months have been a learning, growing process. I hope in the course of this year to thank each one of you personally for your support, and for your service, if I didn't get a chance to do so last night!

Thanks also to my law firm, McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter, which has been extraordinarily supportive during this time. Six of my partners are with us today! Please stand and be recognized.

I want to recognize the presidents of the ABA who are with me today. I'm proud to welcome Jerry Shestack, recipient of this year's ABA medal.

I want to thank the many members of my family and friends joining me here today—from PA, NJ, NY, IA, CO, CA, Hawaii, and Germany!

My two nieces, and a 6 month-old great nephew came from Germany to be with us today. One of these young women is stationed at Ramstein AFB and the other served as a navigator on the USS Kittyhawk in Japan.

I want to share with you a recent experience. While in DC, I was Marine General Kevin Sandkuler's honored guest at the Marine sunset parade. It was a stirring and inspiring setting.

- The drum and bugle corps,
- the rifle drill teams, and
- the setting at the Iwo Jima Memorial

combined to make this one of the most memorable moments of my life.

It provided a solemn venue to consider the magnitude of the contributions made by our servicemen and women to our country. It humbled me.

I would like to express my gratitude to the men and women who are serving in the military. We need to be there for them, as they are for us. I would ask all the retired and active military—including my nieces—members of the reserve and national guard who here today, to stand and receive our thanks.

When I look out at these men and women, I recall the words of John Donne:

No man is an island entire of itself;

every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main....

Recognizing this fact, “service” is the theme of this bar year. When we serve, we acknowledge that we are part of the greater whole.

Our generation has lived in an extraordinary era.

- We’ve enjoyed the benefits of democracy, excellent education, professional success.
- We’ve experienced freedom and prosperity.
- We have good health and unprecedented life expectancy.

At this point in our lives, service is not an obligation but an opportunity.

For our generation, the call to service came early, in John F. Kennedy's inaugural address.

“Ask not,” he said, and we answered.

- We answered when we enlisted.
- We answered when we went to law school.
- We answered when we joined protests.
- We answered when we ran for office.
- We answered when we volunteered for charities.
- We answered when we joined the ABA.

We worked long hours for our clients, and then a little longer.

We juggled work and family and we answered.

We were knocked down and we failed.

We struggled back to our feet. And in our struggle, we answered.

Some of us were immoral, and in our collective shame, the rest of us answered.

Some among us soared, and in our collective pride, we answered.

As lawyers, we answered the call. We served because it is in our nature to do so.

When we serve, we are more productive members of our communities.

- We’re better protectors of our legal system.
- We’re better citizens.
- We’re better people.

It seems so simple.

- Two words, “ask not,” capture the generation that became the Peace Corp.
- They capture the fight for civil rights and voting rights.
- They describe the struggle for women’s rights.

- They capture the collective energy of the people in this room
 - and the 400,000 members of the ABA,
 - and the 1 million lawyers in America.

So now, you're tempted to reply, "Enough! I've done enough."

As we reach our 50's and our 60's, we are tempted to say, "I'm tired."

We *will* slow down. We *will* cut back. We *will* retire.

But we are not the generation that T.S. Eliot described when he wrote,

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.

You *may* do that this week. But you won't do that for the rest of your lives.

Baby Boomers have reshaped every social institution we touched, and retirement will be no exception.

The greatest challenge facing the profession and the Association in the coming years is the movement of the Baby Boom generation into active retirement. An unprecedented number of lawyers are going to leave the full-time practice of law in the next 10 years. Thus far, we've done very little to address it, but the time has come.

It will affect us in many ways:

- Some will cut back to part-time practice
- Most of us will find rewarding activities, through *pro bono* work, or volunteer service.
- The loss of lawyers at every level of the profession—from law schools to the bench—will place a strain on those who remain.
- The profession will lose most of its current leadership.
- Younger lawyers—facing more change than any previous generation—will need guidance.
- The cumulative experience of our generation will be a lost resource if we don't take steps to capture it.

Every institution in our legal system must develop programs and practices to address this seismic demographic shift.

The ABA is no exception.

Under the banner, Second Season of Service, the ABA will provide information, leadership, and guidance to help the profession cope with these challenges and opportunities.

The ABA itself is not immune to the impact. A May 2006 survey asked members "what

would you like the ABA to do more of?"

- Almost half want us to address trends and issues facing the profession. Second Season will do that.

So will Youth at Risk, a national service project aimed at the most troubled young people in our country, who risk being caught up in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. They are foster kids, truants, gang members, and just plain kids who have lost their way.

President Kennedy reminded us:

For those to whom much is given, much is required...

So, take some time off. But when you come back, connect to Second Season, and its Atticus Network, which will link you to non-profit agencies that need your help.

Roll your trousers. But then roll up your sleeves and work with a kid in your community.

Walk on the beach. And then get on a plane to help spread and strengthen the ABA's Rule of Law projects throughout the world. Begin by joining us as our September Symposium in Chicago.

Yes, we're getting older. We can't remember names and we can't read small print. We can't do aerobics or stay up late.

But that doesn't mean we are going to spend retirement rocking on the porch. Not this group. There's a lot of life left in the Baby Boom. And a lot of law.

We've gone from "Don't trust anyone over 30" to "60 is the new 40."
That gives us 20 years!

Today I ask you to enter into a **new** commitment to service. Your involvement at this moment in your life can be the most ennobling work of your career.

Ask not if you have done enough. There is too much work yet to do.

- Ask not if you are finished. The work is not yet finished.
- Ask not if someone else can do your part. No one has your experience.

With your commitment, the Baby Boom generation can once again change the world.

Dedicate the next 20 years of your life to public service. **Then** you can say, "My work is done."

Until then, ask not.

Thank you.